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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SARAJEVO 001157

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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR (DICARLO), EUR/SCE (HOH, FOOKS); NSC FOR BRAUN

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SUBJECT: NEW SERBIAN FOREIGN MINISTER MAKES EARLY OFFICIAL VISIT TO BOSNIA

REF: SARAJEVO 510

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Judith B. Cefkin for reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

¶11. (C) Summary: During his first official visit to Bosnia May 28, new Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic stressed his government's commitment to improving relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina and ICTY cooperation. Alkalaj provided post a generally positive readout of his meeting with Jeremic. The visit included a stop in Banja Luka for a dedication ceremony for a new Serbian Consulate where Milorad Dodik surprised FM Jeremic by publicly submitting an application for dual citizenship. Press reports in general covered Jeremic's visit in a positive light. End Summary

Bilateral and Regional Issues

¶12. (SBU) On May 28, new Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic paid an official visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina. On his first official visit after assuming office as Foreign Minister, Jeremic was hosted by Bosnian Foreign Minister Sven Alkalaj in Sarajevo before traveling to Banja Luka to officially open a new Serbian Consulate there. In public comments after his meeting with Alkalaj, Jeremic stressed his government's commitment to building neighborly relations with BiH along with improving regional cooperation. He highlighted the need for Serbia to complete cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia (ICTY) and his government's intention to respect the International Court of Justice (ICJ) decision regarding Serbia's failure to prevent genocide. On Kosovo he repeated familiar Belgrade talking points that Kosovo should remain part of Serbia with a heightened degree of autonomy. For his part, Alkalaj adopted a carefully crafted position, stating that Kosovo status should ideally be resolved in a manner acceptable to both Belgrade and Pristina.

Opening of Serbian Consulate in Banja Luka

¶13. (U) After visiting Sarajevo Jeremic traveled to Banja Luka where he presided over the opening of a new Serbian Consulate. At the ceremony Jeremic highlighted that, in selecting Bosnia for his first official visit, he was signaling Serbia's intention to improve relations with Bosnia. RS Prime Minister Milorad Dodik told Jeremic how much the consulate meant to the citizens of the RS and then in front on the cameras handed Jeremic a request for Serbian citizenship. This apparently unscripted action by Dodik

seemed to surprise Jeremic who quickly recovered stating that his government would "work efficiently on the request."

BiH Foreign Minister appraisal of visit

¶4. (C) Bosnian Foreign Minister Sven Alkalaj provided the Charge with a readout of Jeremic's visit on May 28. Alkalaj said he was very pleased with his introductory meeting with Jeremic. He commented that Jeremic impressed him as sincere, and that he felt he had established a good rapport. Alkalaj also noted that Jeremic has Bosnian heritage on his mother's side of the family. (Note: During the conversation with the Charge, Alkalaj took a cell phone call from Jeremic reporting on his Banja Luka stop. The tenor of the conversation sounded very friendly. End Note.) Alkalaj said Jeremic expressed Belgrade's determination to improve relations with Bosnia, and preemptively raised the issue of ICTY and the ICJ verdict and told Alkalaj that results from increased ICTY cooperation should be expected soon. Jeremic and Alkalaj discussed a plan for the Bosnian Tri-Presidency to visit Serbia in July. On the question of Dodik's application for Serbian citizenship, Alkalaj told the Charge Dodik was free to apply for any other citizenship he chooses, but that if there is no dual-nationality recognition treaty in force, Dodik stands to lose his Bosnian citizenship in 2010 (reftel).

¶5. (C) On Kosovo Jeremic told Alkalaj that the province must remain a part of Serbia and that if the U.S. introduces a UNSC resolution on Kosovo in the next few days, Serbia expects the Russians to veto it. Alkalaj was skeptical and indicated to us that his sources believe the Russians would not use their veto. As he has in the past, Alkalaj again

SARAJEVO 00001157 002 OF 002

stressed that Bosnia hopes for a resolution the Kosovo status at an early date but that it would not be politically realistic to expect Bosnia to be among the first countries to recognize a newly independent Kosovo. Alkalaj reiterated that he does not expect a Kosovo independence to have a destabilizing effect in Bosnia.

Comment

¶6. (C) The Jeremic visit received positive reactions on all fronts. FM Jeremic's statements on Kosovo were not unexpected, but he eschewed the more inflammatory rhetoric of his predecessor Vuk Draskovic. The emphasis by FM Jeremic on ICTY cooperation and ICJ implementation and his conciliatory statements on closing a painful page in history and improving bilateral relations were particularly well received. End

Comment
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